



Celebrating 30 Years of Small Business Success

April 21, 2014

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Common Errors Can Plague Small Businesses' Websites

By Caroline M. Portillo on *dispatch.com*, 4/14/14 - If your small business doesn't have a website, you're missing out on clients and cash. Already have a site? Good. Now, let's talk strategy because the quality of that site also could be affecting your bottom line. "An (unpolished site) definitely colors the way you look to the world. It colors your value to the consumer. And it can definitely hurt you," said Buffy McCoy Kelly, partner and creative director of ad agency Tattoo Projects in Charlotte, N.C.

McCoy Kelly and other experts in marketing, advertising and Web design compiled a list of mistakes that small-business owners often make when developing and maintaining websites. Their tips:

Visual mistakes

- Burying contact information: The whole point of the website is to be a point of entry for a customer. So don't hide your phone number and email address at the bottom of one tab, said Randy Smith, founder of Charlotte-based Synchronicity Web Designs. And make that email address a hyperlink.
- Failing to embrace "white space": White space is the artsy term for the blank area on printed pages, posters and websites. And in a layout, it can be as effective as type. If there's too much vying for a user's attention on a site, they won't know where to go for the answer they needed. So simplify the visuals and focus on one or two key images and short paragraphs.
- Dead links: It's a good idea to log onto your website from a different computer every once in a while and make sure that there are no links that lead to sites that no longer exist.

Content mistakes

- Too many words: But "people scan websites; they don't read them. They're looking for the best content in about the ... top third of what they read." In the "About Us" section, you should give a clear picture of your business in one short paragraph. If you need more space to describe complex, industry-specific products or services, she said, do it in other areas of the site.

- Typos and grammatical errors: This is an easy way to alienate an audience. Have knowledgeable eyes scan your site to check for potentially costly mistakes.
- Failing to focus on search-engine optimization: You could have a beautiful site, but without industry buzzwords, you won't land high on a Google search. Small-business owners should make a list of the top 25 keywords or phrases that define their business and industry. Then build a plan for how to best use those keywords consistently.

Program Success of the Week – Bottom Dollar Cost Plus Foods

After 37 combined years in the grocery industry, Beverly and Tom Schmutz know a good retail opportunity when they see one. Blending their knowledge of the former Mad Pricer store in Herrin, Illinois, experience in retail, and expert market research, they decided to open Bottom Dollar Cost Plus foods in Herrin, Illinois.

The "Cost Plus" format is proving to be a credible alternative to conventional retailers like Wal Mart, Kroger, IGA, Albertson's and Safeway. Shoppers looking for higher quality name brand products that they cannot find at traditional limited assortment retailers like ALDI's and Save-a-Lot are turning to "Cost Plus" stores. Herrin's new Bottom Dollar Cost Plus Foods carries name brands and looks like a traditional grocery store. However, prices are determined by cost of getting product to the shelf plus 10%. Using this system Bottom Dollar is able to charge 10% to 15% less than the competition.

The Schmutz's were referred to the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Rend Lake College by the Community First Bank of the Heartland to develop a business plan to present for a Small Business Administration loan. The couple initially met with Curt Mowrer, the SBDC Director in late January 2013. The plan was completed and submitted to the bank for consideration. Funding was accomplished through a partnership between Community First Bank of the Heartland, SBA and the Schmutz family. An open house and ribbon cutting for the Herrin Bottom Dollar Cost Plus Foods store took place on March 21, 2014.

The couple saw more opportunity in nearby DuQuoin, Illinois which had recently lost the Kroger Store. Wal Mart remained the only grocer in town. Mr. Schmutz again worked with Curt at the Rend Lake College SBDC to plan a Bottom Dollar Cost Plus Foods store in the old Kroger building.

The plan came together with the assistance of DuQuoin Sales Tax Increment Financing along with funding from the Champion Community Investment group and an SBA 7a loan from the Community First Bank of the Heartland. The DuQuoin store will open in June of 2014. The community is ecstatic about having more grocery shopping choices.

Resource of the Week – Enhanced ProfitCents

The industry's leading financial analysis and benchmarking tool has been updated to improve user experience and better meet the needs of you and your clients. You can now access the solution from your desktop, tablet, or mobile device, making it easier than ever to engage with clients from any location. To learn more about these changes, [click here](#).

In addition to our product enhancements, we have created a new digital ProfitCents Help Center to provide you with a variety of resources, such as FAQs, how-to-videos, and tutorials. You can access the new help center by clicking on the support icon within ProfitCents. Should you need further assistance, your consultant is still available for questions and specialized training.



Neoserra/WebCATS Update – Economic Impact Survey Results

Recently an error was discovered that was causing some of the Economic Impact reported by your clients through the electronic Impact Survey to be incorrectly credited to the DCEO ILLINOIS SBDC LEAD CNETER in Neoserra/WebCATS. That problem has been fixed and you will now see your clients impact being correctly attributed to your center. Please contact Tom Becker if you have any questions or need additional information.

Moves and News – Meet the Lenders – May 6th

The U. S. SBA is sponsoring a special Meet the Lenders Matchmaking event on Tuesday, May 6, 2014 from 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield. There is no charge for participating but interested small businesses should RSBP to Stephanie.Schatz@sba.gov or (217)793-5020 Ext. 114. Please distribute the attached flyer to interested small businesses and help us promote this important event.

America's SBDC Network Connect

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the April 17, 2014 edition of [America's SBDC Network Connect newsletter](#).

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The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.

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